

map indicates, on degree of humidity rather than on true faunal conditions — humidity and temperature combined. They thus do not correspond to areas commonly designated as 'faunal,' based on the peculiar association of species as determined primarily by temperature and secondarily, in most cases, by humidity. California offers an almost unique field for this sort of research, and it is gratifying to see that the subject is receiving so much attention.

A very full and satisfactory index, including all the names mentioned in the 'synonymy,' completes this very important and exceedingly useful contribution to California ornithology.—J. A. A.

Berlepsch and Hartert on the Birds of the Orinoco Region.<sup>1</sup>—This excellent memoir is based on collections made by Mr. and Mrs. George K. Cherrie in 1897, 1898 and 1899, on the Orinoco River, with much additional material collected by Mr. Samuel M. Klages, partly on the Caura River, and by Mr. E. André on the Nicare, a tributary of the Caura. The number of specimens thus available for study is not stated, but must be several thousand. The number of species and subspecies represented is 468, of which 8 species and 44 subspecies are described as new, as well as one genus. Localities and dates of collection are given, with notes on the color of bill, feet, iris, and 'soft parts,' as furnished by the collectors. There is also, *passim*, important comment on nomenclatural questions, the relationship of forms, etc. The memoir closes with some 'General Conclusions' (signed E. H.) on the faunal relations of the different parts of the region under treatment. Owing to the many difficulties presented, none of the collectors was able to reach "the unexplored tableland and mountain ranges forming the watershed between the basins of the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers, marked as the 'Sierra Parima' on the maps," which region hence still offers a tempting field for ornithological exploration.

In this connection the authors have done good service in attempting to fix type regions for the species described by previous authors from unknown, erroneous, or vaguely given localities. They have "in every case quoted the original description, which is the basis of our knowledge of each particular form," to which their citations are mainly limited, instead of including well known works, such as the British Museum 'Catalogue of Birds,' "where everybody knows that the bird is described or mentioned." "Where no locality is stated in the first description, or where the given locality is vague or erroneous, *we have added or substituted a sufficiently exact 'habitat'* as a starting-point. These additions and substitutes are not arbitrarily chosen, but always those that are the actual or the most likely ones whence the types have come, as apparent from the

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<sup>1</sup>On the Birds of the Orinoco Region. By Count Hans von Berlepsch and Ernest Hartert. *Novitates Zoologicæ*, Vol. IX, 1902, pp. 1-134, pl. xii.

history of collections, from the travels of collectors, and the distribution of the various forms. Our substituted localities are therefore not only of value for the present work — inasmuch as they indicate that particular form with which we have compared, or tried to compare, the specimens before us, when deciding about their subspecific relations — *but we expect them to be accepted as the starting-point for future work* also." The acceptance, so emphatically insisted upon, must of course depend upon the merits of their ruling in each particular case; but, in most cases at least, their decisions appear to have been made with care and will doubtless meet with approval. As they truly say, if in separating an early composite species into its proper elements, errors sometimes made in taking a wrong form for the 'typical' one would be avoided if proper consideration were given to the subject of the original 'habitat.' They add: "If no such one is given, the first author who 'splits' the form up has the right to accept one; and this right we may logically claim in cases where we have not named a new form." This principle is so obviously sound, and is so widely followed, at least in America, that we are only surprised that it should be thought necessary to state the matter with so much insistence.

We quote further with pleasure the closing paragraph of Mr. Hartert's 'Concluding Remarks': "In nomenclatorial questions and orthography of names we have adhered strictly to priority, and although our ideas are not quite the same in every detail, we were able to agree in almost every case. This clearly shows that those who pretend that no finality can be reached in nomenclature<sup>1</sup> are quite in error. It is always the ignorance or disregard of the first publication, and the emendation of the spelling, that causes trouble, not the unsophisticated reference to and use of the earliest name as it was and is." This is assurance that the tendency is strong in favor of the strict enforcement of the law of priority and the non-emendation of names, so strenuously advocated for many years by the A. O. U. We are therefore not a little surprised to note on p. 129, apropos of *Purra* vs. *Jacana*, that these authors "refuse Brisson's names of genera, which are no genera in the Linnæan sense." Brisson's names were especially accepted by the original B. A. Code (1842), they antedating the XIIth edition of Linnaeus, which this Code made the starting-point of the binomial system of nomenclature, and are now in current use by the greater part of both mammalogists and ornithologists. It is therefore to be hoped that for the sake of uniformity and harmony these authors will, on further consideration, waive their preferences in favor of accepting Brissonian genera. The objection that they are "no genera," in the modern sense, will apply quite as well to the currently accepted 'genera' of many other authors. — J. A. A.

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<sup>1</sup>"Some reviewers of modern zoölogical literature are especially fond of this vague statement."